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ABSTRACT

A case is made for establishing more community-based socialization programs for 10- to 15-year-old black males from disadvantaged families in poor neighborhoods. It is argued that effectively run neighborhood-based programs can accomplish the following: (1) establish caring and nurturing relationships that earn youths' attention and trust; (2) convey information about the options, strategies, skills, and behavior available and necessary for their happiness and success in society; (3) develop apparent changes in the preferences and values of youths; and (4) lead young people to freely choose socially acceptable, non-destructive, and social-mobility-enhancing activities and roles in their families and neighborhoods. Evidence for these arguments was derived from the experiences of 24 existing programs in six cities. Interviews were conducted with about one-third of these program administrators, and written questionnaires were answered by four programs. Advice is offered for policymakers and private sector funders who may be interested in supporting such programs. The following materials are appended: (1) a list of 26 references; (2) a model funding proposal; (3) a discussion of program outcomes; and (4) a list of programs. (SLD)

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THE CASE FOR COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMS THAT INFORM AND MOTIVATE BLACK MALE YOUTH

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November 5, 1990

An Urban Institute Research Paper

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Abstract. This paper makes the case for more community-based socialization programs for 10-15 year old black males from disadvantaged families in poor neighborhoods. It argues that effectively run neigborhood-based programs can: (1) establish caring and nurturing relationships that earn youths' attention and trust so that programs can (2) convey information about the options, strategies, skills and behavior available and necessary for their happiness and success in this society. This can lead to (3) apparent changes in youths' preferences (values), manifest by an increased propensity to (4) freely choose socially acceptable, non-destructive and social-mobility-enhancing activities and roles in their families and neighborhoods. Suggestive evidence comes from programs in six cities. The paper offers advice for policy makers and private sector funders who may consider supporting such programs.

INTRODUCTION

African American males, particularly those from low income female headed households, are vastly over represented among the under-educated, the jobless and the jailed. Reversing this waste of human potential is among the most important challenges facing the nation.

This paper develops a framework for understanding the potential role of community based programs in the nation's response to this challenge. The goal is to make positive life-options more feasible and attractive for African American male youth from disadvantaged communities. The paper concentrates on boys aged 10 through 15. The passage from childhood to adolescence occurs during these years and brings dramatic changes in physical, cognitive, and social development. (Hamburg, 1990; Task Force for Education of Young Adolescents, 1989) As they experiment with new identities and life styles, boys choose teen peer groups and make important decisions about the types of men they aim to be. These decisions are often misinformed and doomed to produce trouble for themselves, their families and for society at large.

We argue here that timely and well managed interventions, targeted at high-risk youth and armed with well packaged information and social support, can make the difference between wasted and productive lives. The paper

describes what such interventions do. An appendix summarizes what the request for proposals for an ideal program might comprise. While the examples and the concerns that motivate the paper center on black males, many of the issues and much of the basic framework that the paper develops apply to girls and to other racial and ethnic groups as well.

While resting firmly on insights from interviews with the operators of existing programs, the paper draws from the social sciences for additional conceptual structure. Key concepts in the paper connect a progression of issues that bear on motivating young people and facilitating their engagement in activities to enhance social mobility. The paper discusses how the programs that the project visited use various techniques to expand children's knowledge of options, to inform them about the strategies necessary for exploiting those options, to teach them the skills necessary for implementing the strategies, and to craft short term reward structures that lead them to freely choose to "do the right thing." Strategies and skills that programs address go beyond standard categories to include, for example, ways of managing the anger and emotional pain that are often by-products of social and economic disadvantage. Race and cultural issues are cross-cutting themes. The paper uses quotations liberally in order to capture personalities and nuances of expression that convey important sentiments.

This paper aspires to serve academics, youth-serving practitioners, and policy makers. Its approach is purposefully eclectic, teetering on a ledge between social science and program design: it relies on social science literature for bits of evidence and for elements of a conceptual framework but it does not formulate nor test hypotheses directly. It uses quantitative and qualitative data to illustrate ideas and practices but not to evaluate

particular programs. Finally, while the paper is primarily about ideas and practices that seem to work, and while it advocates a programmatic vision, it also emphasizes that formal evaluations to carefully measure program impacts need to follow.

BACKGROUND

This project originated after a round-table discussion at the Rockefeller Foundation in April of 1989. A dominant theme was that African American male teenagers, especially those who engage in problem behaviors, often have self-esteem deficits because, in various ways, society denies them dignity and respect. The first paper from this project (Ferguson with Jackson, 1990) addresses some of the specific messages through which parents, teachers, peers, and society at large communicate low expectations and disrespect. The present paper was to be specifically about programs that build self-esteem. Self-esteem was the defining criterion by which the project chose programs to visit. However, as the project has evolved, self-esteem has faded as a conceptual focus. The reasons are worth explaining because they shed light on the characteristics of our target population.

The empirical literature on how self-perceptions affect behavior and performance comes to few clear conclusions. (For overviews see: Mecca, Smelser, and Vasconcellos, 1989; Hansford and Hattie, 1982) Psychologists' measures of self-esteem usually ask respondents to rate how satisfied they are with themselves and their lives. When researchers distinguish self-esteem from self-concept, which too often they do not, they define self-concept to be self-perceptions of particular traits or abilities such as attractiveness, intelligence, or athletic ability. However, for self-concept on a given dimension to affect a person's "global" self-esteem the person has to care

about (or value) that dimension. (Rosenberg and Kaplan, 1982) Some youths have low academic self-concepts, for example, but claim to feel good about themselves. If we take their claims at face value, it appears that academic ability is not sufficiently salient relative to other dimensions of self concept (e.g., street survival skills) on which they rank themselves higher. (see, e.g., Brounstein, Hatry, et. al., 1989)

However, we can infer from ethnographic work that black male youth culture will sometimes mitigate against honest answers to self-esteem questions. Black male peer socialization places a high value on being cool -- on conveying self-satisfaction and invincibility. (Majors, 1986; Taylor, 1982) Youths who think that they have failed in mainstream institutions may therefore decide not to admit (perhaps even to themselves) that it bothers them: they may look to unconventional sources for fulfillment and find enough social reinforcement there (e.g., in the streets) that they can rationalize feeling good about themselves. Similarly, the well known anti-achievement bias among some black youth, wherein trying too conspicuously to do well academically is grounds for being accused of "acting white," (Fordham, 1988; Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Kunjufu, 1988; Ferguson with Jackson, 1990) may distort the relationships between measured self-esteem, self-concept, performance, and ability.

Adults who work closely with black youth know them more intimately than survey researchers can: a self-assured youth who gives one answer on a survey may feel less sure of himself and give a different answer when faced by a familiar and savvy adult who is asking the same question. Across most of the programs that we visited, staffers openly described their relationships with regular program participants as resembling extended family ties. Hence, it should come as no surprise that while researchers get mixed results, front line

workers in neighborhood based programs cling to the conviction that a critical problem for many youth is low self-esteem. This is especially understandable when one adds the fact that people who work with children often mean something broader than what researchers mean. Often, the term seems to be a catch-all for discouragement about chances for conventional success -- for all of the beliefs and uncertainties about self (in a given social context) that dissuade a young person from fully engaging in wholesome and age-appropriate roles.

METHODOLOGY

During the summer and fall of 1989, this project interviewed staff and participants of more than twenty neighborhood based programs that address the developmental needs of African American males aged 5 through 25. The goals of the project were to understand (1) what neighborhood programs aiming to improve self-esteem were actually doing, (2) how program operators understood the nature of the challenge, and (3) what difference they thought their work was making. Most program participants were from low-income single-parent households in Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Hartford, Pittsburgh, and Washington DC. (See list in Appendix 2.) Expert local informants helped to identify the programs. Venues included public housing, churches, social service agencies, community recreation centers, reformatories, and universities. Program titles ranged from dropout prevention to teen pregnancy prevention, from cultural enrichment to drug abuse prevention. Most, however, provided more general forms of socialization and addressed a broader array of issues the titles suggested.

Interviews were conducted on-site with program directors and were often supplemented by follow-up telephone calls. Most interviews were tape recorded. Written materials from programs supported the interviews. Other

staff members joined in about half of the meetings. Information that the project sought from each program included: history and context of the program; target population and salient characteristics of participants; race, sex, age and professional backgrounds of staff; program design and its underlying theory and philosophy; implementation details such as materials used, instructional styles, program duration, frequency of contact, family involvement, use of volunteers; forms, sources, and uses of financial and other resources; judgements about program effectiveness and associated measures. We interviewed program participants at about one third of the sites and, in four cases, administered written questionnaires. Two of the four groups that completed questionnaires were youth in the 10 to 15 age range. (See Appendix 3.)

Given the brevity of contact, it was not always possible to judge the difference between a program director's ideal vision of what the program could be, given adequate resources, versus what the program actually was in practice. However, in many cases we discussed programs with outside informants and found little discrepancy. In one case, outsiders suggested that a program director had exaggerated the scale of his program. In two other cases, outsiders reported that directors were overextended and that despite good program models they were failing to provide quality management.

Programs were small and highly varied in design. Most served fewer than 100 children per year. Funding came primarily from local foundations, corporate sponsors and local government, with smaller amounts from private donations. Staff sizes ranged from 1 to about 8, rather evenly distributed through this range. Despite the variation, however, most operators had visions whose focal purposes and methods overlapped substantially with those of other operators. This paper reports the common core of their shared vision and

offers preliminary evidence of its practicality.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A few key concepts from the social sciences are especially useful for framing what follows. First is the idea that all humans share basic motives (or drives or needs) that are the fundamental aims of human behavior. (McClelland, 1987). Psychologists do not agree on one precise list, but few would dispute that achievement, affiliation, influence, security, avoidance of discomfort, and freedom from hunger are primary. Self-esteem is also a basic motive, closely related to achievement and affiliation. (Maslow, 1970)

Conceptually, one can imagine decomposing preferences for particular objects or activities into component preferences for the good feelings associated with achievement, affiliation, influence, freedom from hunger, and so on. Consider some simple examples. A good student may like school because it permits him to experience achievement and to have influence with peers and teachers. A poor student may be ambivalent: repeatedly failing exams is uncomfortable but this may be partially compensated by the affiliative payoffs of being with friends during the school day. In trying to understand why a young black male (or anyone else) seems more attracted to one activity than to another, it is often useful to ask what payoffs the two provide in the most basic terms -- affiliation, achievement, influence, and so on.

A second useful idea from the social sciences concerns roles. People find achievement, influence, and affiliation through performing standardized and not so standardized roles in their families and communities. Roles are fundamentally social. They constitute patterns of interaction through typically well-defined relationships, in which actors engage in "exchanges" of goods, services, and sentiments that affect satisfaction on both sides of the

transaction. We play several roles simultaneously (leader, follower, helper, student, employee, father, bully) and may move through many roles in a given day. When a person has difficulty succeeding in a given role, psychologists predict that the person will experience "role strain" and may adapt (or maladapt) by shifting to other more manageable roles. (Bowman, 1989) Preparing people to assume socially useful and personally satisfying roles in families and communities is the essence of a healthy nurturing process and the central purpose of the programs that this paper discusses.

Third, is the idea of engagement. People tend not to engage in activities for which they expect to have no control over the outcomes. The programs that we visited are aspiring to give children more real and perceived control over important outcomes.

For example, Skinner, Wellborn, and Connell (1990) identify factors that promote engagement toward achievement in school. They apply a "general motivational model of relations among context, self, and action" that helps to frame this paper's discussion about how programs stimulate engagement and achievement. Their model makes three important distinctions:

> "(a) Strategy beliefs are expectations about "what it takes for me to do well in school [or in other roles]" (such as effort, ability, powerful others, luck, and unknown factors); (b) capacity beliefs are expectations about whether "I have what it takes" (i.e., Can I exert effort? Am I smart? Liked by powerful others? Lucky?); (c) control beliefs are expectations about "whether or not I can do well in school" without reference to specific means. (Skinner, Wellborn, and Connell, p. 23, 24)

The idea is that when a child (a) knows a strategy which if implemented competently will produce a desired outcome, and (b) perceives that he has the capacity to implement it, then he is more likely to (c) perceive that he has control over the relevant outcome and (d) to engage in an attempt to implement that strategy.

Combining the ideas in the paragraphs above completes the basic framework with which we proceed. Essentially: children may perceive that satisfaction is more readily available through playing some roles (such as bully, class clown, casual student) than through others (such as teacher's helper, serious student). The roles that children choose are those that they expect may yield the greatest satisfaction from among those that are available and for which they feel competent and worthy. The sources of satisfaction that this paper emphasizes are achievement, affiliation, influence and security. In ways that the paper discusses, programs can offer opportunities to experience these in the present, while simultaneously expanding the number of roles that participants know of and feel qualified to pursue for the future. Programs achieve these outcomes through combinations of teaching, caring, providing, and manipulating the youth's environment so that it nurtures him more positively.

TECHNIQUES THAT BUILD HEALTHY LIVES

All of the programs studied for this report aim to help youth excel in positive developmental activities and to sidestep the perverse pressures and temptations confronting boys of their age in low-income neighborhoods. The list of temptations is well known: sex, slacking off in school, truancy, drugs and alcohol, personal and property crimes, and disobedience to parents and other authority figures. These are not unique to low income neighborhoods but, perhaps because support structures in other neighborhoods are stronger and more plentiful, boys from other communities seem to dabble in mischief more innocuously and to escape with their life chances more intact.

A common mission statement of these programs might be: "To promote and facilitate the engagement and success of African American male children in activities that enhance social mobility." This section of the paper concerns

the techniques and arrangements through which programs strive to actualize this mission. It discusses how programs teach children strategies, enhance their skills and confidence, help them to recognize and experience reward structures that foster healthy choices, and provide safe havens away from the temptations of the street.

First, however, we discuss the how caring relationships that provide affiliation and security are the foundation of what programs provide. A child needs at least one adult who (a) cares about him and (b) is an effective guide, broker, advocate and disciplinarian helping to mediate his relationship with the neighborhood environment. Many parents provide only (a) and many social service professionals provide mostly (b), but every child should have at least one adult whom he trusts who combines both. Neighborhood-based programs can provide such adults.

Providing Affiliation and Security

> They [other programs for high school dropouts] didn't work. That's why I'm here now. This program has been the best so far. People ask me what's so special about this program. It's the people. They care and they deliver. Whereas, the other programs they never put their personal feelings in it; it was just like a 9 to 5 type thing. Here, it's the counselors, the mentors, everybody involved in the program... they want to help you ... it's real. It's nothing false about it. You just get a feel for what's real and what's not real -- these people are in it with their heart. (Participant Shawn Satterfield, age 17, Project Roadmap, Baltimore.)

Without the affiliation and security of caring relationships, youth hesitate to incur the costs or to take the risks that conventional success may require. Adults asking children to pursue life options that seem unattainable (e.g., graduate from high school) or to practice behaviors of which peers disapprove (e.g., abstain from sex or avoid drugs) are asking them to forego popular pleasures and to risk failure and social ostracism. Caring relationships are critical in programs because friendships with program-related

youth and adults can compensate to some degree for lost affiliation and influence with the old peer group. Further, before "stepping onto thin ice," a youth needs the security of believing that the advisor has good intentions, can deliver any required assistance, and knows the youth well enough to have made an accurate assessment that he has (or can acquire) the skill to succeed. Finally, expecting that the adult will share in celebrating his success constitutes an additional incentive.

How deeply an adult should become involved in a child's life depends on how much of a commitment he or she is willing to make to the child, how much support the child wants, and how supportively the child's parents respond. An ever-present danger for the child is that once again an adult will make a commitment and not keep it. Children understand that program staff have families and other responsibilities and that therefore practical limits exist to the frequency and intensity of contact. What they desire from adults is clarity, consistency, and clear evidence of concern. Adults who are clear about their commitments, consistent in living up to those commitments, and who show unmistakeable evidence of concern have the most success in working with children over extended periods. Examples below help bring this point to life.

Even though a child may settle for what he can get, a minimum of one interaction per week of at least a few hours in duration seems to be the standard for programs where adults play major supplemental parenting roles. Program professionals testified that the greatest need of the children who <u>most</u> need neighborhood-based programs is their need for love, attention, and brokering from a strong responsible adult who can see them regularly.

This level of involvement can initially threaten parents. However, most become supportive as they learn to trust that the program is operating in the

child's best interest and is not demeaning the parent. Home visits and communication that keep parents informed about program activities facilitate this adjustment. Invitations to attend special events helps to get some parents involved but, for various reasons, failure to respond to such invitations is common even when the parents strongly encourage their children to participate. Encouragement to particupate can be particularly strong from single parent mothers.

Among the most recurrent themes in interviews was the special need that children from black female-headed households have for a relationship with a responsible black adult male. Even mothers for whom parent and provider roles are otherwise quite manageable recognize that their sons (and daughters) need a man's guidance and affection. Some mothers rely on male friends and relatives, while others actively search for programs. Black adult males were present in all of the programs that we visited.

Hartford Connecticut's Always on Saturdays program is a good example of a small program with a low budget that seems to an important difference for youth who participate. (See later sections for examples from more elaborate programs.) Always on Saturdays began five years ago as part of the Hartford Action Plan on Infant Health. Always on Saturdays is a teen pregnancy prevention effort that teaches life skills. It focused initially on African American males aged 9 through 13 from low-income single-parent families. The age range is wider now because some boys need their relationship with Amos Smith and have continued over several years, despite the fact that it is supposed to be a twelve-week program. Amos Smith is a 40-year-old black male who holds a masters degree in social work and receives a part-time salary for his work in the program.

Each Saturday, Smith meets with participants for a few hours in the early afternoon to hold life-skills training and discussion sessions. Since the time is short and he wants to keep the sessions serious, he explicitly rules out sports as an activity. About 25 to 30 boys participate over the course of a year; some come year-round. Smith has become a father figure for about 10 long-term participants. He knows their mothers well, helps with school and occasional court visits, and occasionally with discipline during the week between Saturday meetings. When we visited, he had just returned from taking participants to New York City. His exuberance overflowed: "It was like seeing your kid walk for the first time. The feeling! And their expressions -- the joy that I experienced looking at those kids marvel about being in a hotel in New York!"

The following are excerpts from our interview that show the central role of love and feelings in the program. We would lose too much if we paraphrased, so in Smith's own words:

> What we wanted to do was try to give kids a fresh start -- that is, to grow up learning about themselves, their bodies, how they grow, how they mature, what makes sense in developing and negotiating friendships. ... At first, the program was generally focused around the issues embodied in most traditional prevention programs. There were four concepts, but we have added a fifth. We call the first four concepts keys: decision-making, problem solving, planning, and goal setting In the process of talking with the kids and finding out a lot about what they felt regarding growing up in the environment that they're in, we added another key: feelings. We call it the "Master key."
>
> What we realized [that we needed to] teach them how to deal with feelings regarding being in a household where there was no man, being in a neighborhood where there was no positive model of a man with whom they could identify or talk on an ongoing basis. In fact, many of the kids were unable to identify any single man with whom they could identify or talk. Their models, their leaders, the people whom they respect, were primarily all women, starting with their mothers. ... The other thing that kids tell me is that they come because I'm the only man in their lives that takes some time with them.

> I've worked with kids and adults. If you prove to kids that you are going to be consistent in being there for them, they will walk through walls for you if you ask them to. I have tried to be consistent.

Over five years, Smith has missed one Saturday -- the morning that his wife was killed in an auto accident.

Similar testaments of love and involvement in children's lives came up again and again in our interviews.

When the staff of various programs responded to questions concerning their techniques for building successful relationships with children they gave a variety of answers. Some answers seemed to come from formal training, for example, mirroring body language was an answer that some gave. But most answers came from more personal experience in relationships. The most common answer was that they get personally involved in the lives of children who need it, with few firmly preconceived limits to that involvement. They are good listeners. They treat both children and their parents with respect but also with a gentle firmness that refuses to condone breaches of reasonable and clearly defined norms. They are dependable and "They practice what they preach." This was how people described Amos Smith and other men who work in other programs.

Several programs also work on "building community." A school teacher in Pittsburgh who works with youth in several settings contrasted churches with schools as sites for life-skills programs, arguing that:

> the sense of family, community, belonging, and connectedness, happens differently in the church than it happens in most schools. ... The church is a real fitting place for life-skills programs because you have access to the whole family unit. And even if it isn't the whole family, you have surrogate families and extended families in the context of the church. Any individual automatically has a family once they come to the church. It's a context -- a whole context -- where a person can be holistically nurtured.

Staffers at the Friendly Inn Settlement House in Cleveland made similar statements about extended family relationships in the public housing development that they serve: "We use the extended family norm: we try to find the 'together' adults who are actually or potentially helping to raise Johnny (e.g., if his parents need help) and work with them to help Johnny. This community is like a tribe. The challenge for the program is to get into it and become part of the tribe."

Passages showing the various ways that people talked about feelings and relationships could continue for several more pages. Again, the most emphatic point that community based professionals make is that addressing feelings and building one-on-one relationships (or, as phrased here, providing affiliation and security) are absolutely necessary to effectively serving disadvantaged children. Without these, little else works because children do not trust.

Using Volunteer Mentors

Most programs expect to use volunteer mentors to supplement the love and attention that their paid staffs provide to children, but those that have tried have experienced only limited success at finding mentors and keeping them active. They have discovered that fulfilling mentors' needs is as important for sustaining their involvement as fulfilling youths' needs is to sustaining theirs.

Few programs have the resources to serve the needs of mentors as well as youth. However, the few programs that have had some success in this regard have techniques that are worth reviewing. One program in Columbus, Ohio, is an Afro-centric Rites of Passage Program. Before proceeding to discuss the program's approach to mentoring, let us define briefly what a Rites of Passage Program is. Afro-centric Rites of Passage Programs are programs in which

African-American youth master a series of lessons and skills that qualify them to pass symbolically into black manhood (or womanhood) in a Rites of Passage ceremony at the end of the program. The concept is similar in its purposes to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, but its teachings come from adaptations of traditional African beliefs and place great emphasis on African and Afro-American identity, culture, history, and spirituality. Many such programs have developed rather independently, but a young network of programs is currently in the process of working toward more standardization. Programs for boys and girls are part of the same organization but programs work with boys and girls separately; men work with boys and women with girls. The third annual national conference took place in July, 1990, in Detroit, Michigan.

The county government sponsors the Columbus program and refers participants from social service agencies. The county runs a personal background check on each mentor. All of the mentors and boys in the program are black males. Byron Cunningham, a young African American, runs the Columbus program. We met Cunningham at the second national conference of the Rites of Passage Network in July of 1989.

Each child in Cunningham's program has a personal one-on-one mentor. Children and mentors meet separately in adult-only and child-only activities, as well as in activities where both youth and mentors participate. Mentors and youth also meet one-on-one away from the group about once a week, or more. Among representatives from about ten Rites of Passage programs in a session for experienced program operators, Cunningham was by far the most satisfied with his success at finding and retaining volunteer mentors. Most other programs at the session were run by small cores of committed volunteers who, because they had difficulty retaining other mentors, typically ended up with ratios of about

10 boys to one mentor. This is an especially heavy burden for an unpaid volunteer who has another full-time job, but those who are most committed are willing to pay the price. Cunningham, on the other hand, manages his program full-time, serving (at that time) about 70 mentor-child pairs.

Our notes from the discussion, which we also contributed to the Rites of Passage Network as a record of the meeting, recall the following techniques for managing and sustaining mentorship. Much of the list reflects Cunningham's practices but some of the ideas are from other programs as well.

1. Use existing mentors to recruit new mentors. This serves as quality control, and also takes advantage of bonds between existing mentors and those whom they recruit to keep <u>both</u> active in the program.

2. Define the initial commitment to be for a limited time, e.g., 6 months. This makes potential mentors more inclined to give it a try. The experience of Byron Cunningham's program is that almost all mentors develop a strong enough relationship with the youths that they remain in the program when the first 6 months has ended. Asking for only 6 months is "bait."

3. Make frequent telephone calls (e.g., biweekly) to each mentor to remind him of his commitment and to keep his attention on the program. It is especially important to call a mentor after he fails to attend any group activity.

4. Include activities that are fun for mentors as well as for mentees. This helps to sustain the interest of mentors. It is important to try to understand the needs that the mentors are trying to fulfill through their involvement and, where not inconsistent with program goals and procedures, to try to serve mentors' needs. For example, give recognition and praise to mentors who are doing a good job. Pairing eligibility for adult athletic activities (e.g., playing basketball) with the mentoring program may help in keeping the mens' interest. Of course, this could attract men with the wrong motives, but appropriate oversight and initial screening should minimize this problem.

5. Structure the program so that volunteers who want differing levels of involvement can all find ways to contribute. Think hard about the appropriate balance between program flexibility and structure, and to try earnestly to keep a balance that serves your program's multiple purposes.

6. Screen as carefully as possible. Where possible, letters of recommendation from associates and background checks for criminal records are advisable.

7. Make orientation sessions where mentors learn what is expected of them and what they can expect from the program well organized and thorough.

(See Walsh, 1989, for similar insights.)

All of the programs that use one-on-one mentoring stress the importance of flexibility in making matches. Most describe an informal process wherein the boys and the men become acquainted over a period of a few weeks through joint participation in a few recreational activities and then express their tentative preferences to someone whose job it is to make the matches. Some first matches are not comfortable and partners change. The length of time that it takes for relationships to jell varies, but Cunningham's experience (contingent of course on his management techniques and resources) is that close to 100 percent of the mentors stay after the first 6 months.

Another program that makes one-on-one matches is Project Roadmap, where the mentors are black male employees of an IBM service center in Baltimore. Dave Johnson is the head of the IBM service center and directs the mentoring arm of Project Roadmap. The mentoring operates in partnership with an academic skills and counseling component that the Baltimore Urban League manages. LaFon Porter is a mentor in Project Roadmap and describes the bonding process as follows:

> Its had its ups and downs. Getting a relationship started, it takes a lot of time and at first -- with any type of relationship -- it may not go as smooth as you would like it. You may not be able to get the trust. I can imagine that if I were a client coming in to a situation like this -- seeing a whole lot of professional young blacks in white shirts -- it could be intimidating. We had avenues to break that down. For instance, on the weekend, we would play basketball -- the IBM mentors against the clients.
>
> It was a lot of just one-on-one personal type things that took place. ... I let him meet some of my friends. Actually, we played racquetball once with some of my friends. A lot of interpersonal things took place to try to gain that relationship that I think was needed.

When this mentoring relationship began the interactions were about once a week. At the time of our interview, which was about 8 months after the beginning of the mentorship, Larry reported that he talked with his mentee

"every day or every other day." Dave Johnson says that in his own case, "We talk to each other every day maybe twice a day. We usually see each other every week or during the weekend; and they come down to visit the office. It's almost like family."

In most programs, much of the mentoring is group mentoring in which a group of children relate to a group of adults. This seems to be the most common model in programs with paid staff. Programs that use paid staff find that each staff member develops special relationships with several children, and any given child may have special bonds to several staff members. As suggested above, many programs resemble extended families.

Though several people had strong opinions about the need for matching children and mentors by sex and race, we saw evidence of strong across-sex and across-race child-adult bonding. However, it was impossible to tell from our brief visits whether some potential participants are turned off by the unavailability of staffers and mentors with whom they might more closely identify and to whom they might more easily relate. We suspect, for example, that at one site where the majority of the staffers are white and some are female, some of the more street-wise youths in the neighborhood may not identify with the program as much as they might if more of the staffers were "cool" black males. We suspect that matching race and sex matter more for some youths than for others. Also, not having a match is probably more important as a barrier to initial engagement than as a foundation for the ongoing relationship. Sensitivity seems to be the only absolute requirement.

Peer-to-peer and child-to-adult bonding grows over time as participants interact in activities that staff members oversee. Most people endorse the importance of both types of bonding and claim that their programs accomplish

both. As the bonding and trust grows, so also does the degree to which programs can both formally and informally address children's more personal concerns. Similarly, children's certainty that behaving and performing well will draw praise and other reinforcing feedback grows and provides strong motivation.

It is difficult to find useful and accurate statements about required time frames for establishing enough rapport for an adult to influence a child. Obviously, every relationship has its own time frame. However, children say that some effects, such as the incentive effect of knowing that program staffers are going to look at school report cards, can have immediate influence. Also, an adult's encouragement and attention regarding school performance are among the signals that a youth may use early in a relationship to gauge how much the adult cares.

Teaching About Strategies

Let us begin with an extreme example.

The young man in the example is a black 17-year-old honor student with a 3.8 grade point average (on a 4 point scale) at a prestigious Catholic high school. His mother is a single parent, unemployed, and an alcoholic. We learned about him because he approached a counselor seeking help for his mother. The boy told the counselor that he was selling drugs to accumulate money for college because he expected that his mother could afford to send him: selling drugs was his strategy for funding his education. He was uninformed about financial aid: he did not know that the most expensive private universities in the nation give all-expenses-paid financial aid packages to African American males with his profile; he had never spoken to a guidance counselor about college. Neither had he encountered a program such as

those that this paper addresses, that even by age 15 might have introduced him to less risky and more socially acceptable ways to finance his education. This illustrates that even when children have skills and laudable purposes, the strategies that they choose may nevertheless be tragically uninformed and misdirected when they lack proper sources of information.

Boys in the 10-to-15-year old age range need a great deal of information. They are in a pivotal stage in their lives, making fundamental choices about what roles they want for themselves now, later as older teens, and eventually as adults, and what strategies they will use to pursue those roles. Our interviews found widespread agreement that, though older teens are more impressionable than we often assume, pre-teenage and early teenage boys are clearly the most eager for help in understanding life. Through their everyday interaction with other people, they study the roles that people play and see a roster of potential options.

Which roles a child chooses from the roster depends on (a) what options he is aware of (e.g., Does he know about careers in investigative reporting?), (b) for which of these he knows the strategies (e.g., Does he know the steps to becoming an investigative reporter?), (c) which strategies he thinks he has the ability to implement (i.e., Does he think he has the resources and smarts to do what it takes?), and (d) which roles he expects will bring the greatest satisfaction -- the best combination of good feelings associated with influence/power, achievement, affiliation, security, and other basic motivations.

Judging from what we learned in our visits, 10-to-15-year olds are eager to learn strategies for living healthy and productive lives. In addition to long-range strategies, they want ideas that they can apply in commonplace

everyday situations.

For example, Lonnie Hudspeth leads a group of three African American men (from the Pittsburgh chapter of One Hundred Concerned Black Men) who volunteer weekly with a group of about fifteen black male adolescents. The men structured the program around the interests of the children, augmented by advice from child development experts like the well known black educator Barbara Sizemore at the University of Pittsburgh. Their "intent was to address physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social development." However, when asked, most of the interests that the boys expressed were in intellectual, social, and emotional development. To the adults' surprise, the boys did not ask for sports or physical development. According to Hudspeth:

> What they wanted from us was help with intellectual and emotional development. They wanted to deal with issues of manhood -- what being a man is all about -- with issues like sexuality and drugs. They wanted to deal with violence in the schools and protecting themselves. These are experiences that they encounter and they wanted to know how to handle them. They wanted to demonstrate their creativity -- to produce a play that would portray their ideas about things. They wanted to go on trips and to see different things and have different experiences.
>
> A number of them had a desire to learn how to control their emotions, for example, when they don't agree with a teacher or don't appreciate the way a teacher or an authority figure 'comes off' to them: belittling them or making them feel like they're stupid. They wanted to know how to react to that. Typically, if it's a teacher, their usual reaction was to get smart, get into an argument, and to get kicked out of class. If it's a fellow student who they have a problem with, they get into an argument and it breaks out into a fight. In other words, in reaction to feeling put down they would lose control of their emotions and get into trouble. One of the things that we observed was that the young men had a difficult time respecting one another: on the one hand they wanted to receive respect, but on the other they didn't have the proper training to respect one another. We had to work on this with them.

The content of the strategies that programs teach covers a broad range of roles and issues. No program covers every possibility, but several cover a wide assortment. None of the programs that we visited claims to cover more, or

in a more culturally cognizant way, than the Black Male Youth Health Enhancement Project of the Shiloh Baptist Church Family Life Center in Washington D.C. This program uses an Afro-centric Rites of Passage format, augmented by peer counseling, after-school study halls, recreational skills development, a yearly conference on issues facing black males, and other activities. The curriculum occupies weekly classes that covered the following topics during the 1988-89 year preceding our visit:

September -- Aids Education
October -- Self-Esteem
November -- Sexuality/teen Pregnancy
December -- The Human Body
January -- Drug Abuse Education
February -- Cultural Awareness
March -- Nutrition
April -- Physical Fitness/Exercise
May -- Communication Skills
June -- Employment Readiness Skills
July -- Coping with Anger and Anxiety
August -- The Human Body

In addition to topical issues, programs try to frame lessons with general principles and techniques that apply broadly. For example, general decision-making, problem solving, planning, and goal-setting techniques, such as those that Amos Smith uses in the Always on Saturday program, fit this category. Though Smith says that they are the same principles taught in most "prevention" programs, he teaches them using specific real-life examples that both he and the youths provide.

Programs rely on combinations of commercially available and home-grown instructional materials, though several express the desire for a greater variety of culturally tailored curricular options. The strategies that programs convey to youth are easy to understand and essentially the same as those that parents and teachers would ideally teach in other settings. For

example, the basic strategies to avoid making a baby are abstaining or using birth control. Programs teach about alternative kinds of birth control, and address techniques for avoiding sex in the face of social pressure. Other strategies are similarly straightforward: lessons in study skills provide strategies for improving academic performance; discussions of spirituality and God provide strategies for making ethical choices and for finding inner peace; employability skills training teaches interviewing techniques, resume writing, proper dress, budgeting, and other strategies for finding and keeping jobs; health, nutrition, and exercise lessons provide strategies for staying healthy; violence prevention lessons give strategies for avoiding or defusing conflict; and cultural awareness lessons give youth reasons for feeling more positive and confident about their race and culture.

Programs use combinations of standard techniques to teach strategies: (1) they use both formal instruction and informal conversations to describe strategies, (2) they demonstrate strategies and show students role models who are applying the strategies, (3) they provide relevant reading materials, (4) they facilitate discussions in which the youths figure out strategies for themselves, and (5) they help youths to practice strategies (e.g., study and do homework) and then to review the results, focusing on the causal connection between the outcome and what the youth did to cause it. Some programs use quizzes to review strategies and to test comprehension.

In addition to strategies for roles that youngsters already recognize, programs provide exposure to roles and associated strategies that participants never knew existed or never thought were realistic possibilities. In some cases, the new roles would actually <u>not</u> be open if programs did not procure resources from schools, businesses, and other institutions to make them

feasible.

Not surprisingly, the most popular techniques for providing exposure are field trips and guest visits from role models. A more unusual approach (for youths under 16) is to place youngsters at non-traditional job sites, as in the Cambridge Public Housing Authority's Work Force Unemployment Prevention Program. This program teaches standard employability skills to youth beginning at age 13. It then places those 14 to 16 years of age in try-out jobs at sites such as law firms, health spas, and universities; participants can rotate to different job cites in 12-week cycles. They learn new skills, new strategies, and new options from people with whom they would not likely have the opportunity to learn if not for the program. While employed, youths in this program spend one two-hour session each week in discussion sessions with peers and program staffers where they continue to learn life-skills. Staffers also oversee their academic progress, act as advocates between schools and families and generally provide supplemental parenting.

Teaching Skills, Confidence, and Feelings of Worthiness

Familiarizing a child with a role and giving him strategies for attaining and performing that role are necessary but not sufficient for motivating engagement. The child must also expect that he is skilled enough, that external conditions are amenable, and that he is deserving.

Most programs teach strategies and skills and create opportunities simultaneously; a list of the skills that programs teach would basically duplicate the list of strategies listed above. Therefore, for example, when adults tell a child that working hard on homework is a strategy that will improve his grades in school, these same adults will often arrange for that child to receive the tutoring and social support that he needs for acquiring

requisite skills and for developing confidence. After-school study halls and tutoring, for example, are among the methods that the past few pages have mentioned. Even for recreational activities, programs emphasize the importance of skill and help youth to acquire it by encouraging them to practice and by providing instruction and necessary equipment.

Teaching skills to children is complicated by the fact that children vary in their talents and learning styles. Readings that program managers cited on this topic were Howard Gardner's (1983) Frames of Mind: the Theory of Multiple Intelligences and Janice Hale-Benson's (1982) Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles. A number of people also cited other popular books, especially Jawanza Kunjufu's (1983) Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys. Program professionals clearly believe that work in this vein is important. However, none so far seems to have a set of materials and easily transferable instructional techniques for identifying and responding to distinguishable learning styles among children in neighborhood-based programs. This is an area ripe for more systematic development.

Another way that programs assist children in developing skills and confidence is by helping them to understand their successes and failures. For example, Jeffrey Howard, Executive Director of the non-profit Efficacy Institute in Lexington Massachusetts, helps program staff at Freedom House in Boston (as well as other institutions across a number of cities) to understand the psychology of "efficacy" and to incorporate it into their interactions with children. Ideally, the adult builds the child's confidence relative to a particular goal by emphasizing to him that he knows (or can learn) the strategy and that he has (or can develop) the skill to implement it. Otherwise, directing effort toward that goal is irrational. Theoretical and empirical

studies in psychology find that attributing success to effort and ability helps people to justify further engagement in similar efforts. (see, e.g., Seligman, ed., 1980; Marsh et. al, 1984) Attributing failure to lack of ability or to stable uncontrollable external influences is among the surest ways to discourage further effort: incorrectly attributing failure to lack of ability, for example, sets up an expectation that can be self fulfilling because it reduces the child's belief in the efficacy of effort. The child will underinvest in his own skills and over time will accumulate fewer skills than if he had more accurately estimated his own ability, and better understood the cause and effect relationship between effort and outcomes.

Insights such as these infuse the work of people like Bob Harrison in Pittsburgh who runs the Second Step Program and works with youngsters in the public schools using a framework that he calls "Success Modeling." The idea from his framework that we want to emphasize here is the role of self-esteem. For Harrison, the self-esteem issue concerns whether a person feels that he deserves to attain what he envisions. Most people feel uncomfortable receiving or pursuing what they feel they do not deserve. Hence, a child may not wholeheartedly engage in building skills if he feels that someone like him does not deserve the rewards for which those skills would otherwise qualify him.

The feelings of unworthiness that youth need to overcome may be as vague as a general uneasiness at the thought of being in a particular situation. The thought may be inconsistent with one's understanding of social norms or with the cognitive map by which one organizes his world view. Theories of cognitive dissonance and other ideas associated with psychological needs for cognitive and moral consistency help to explain such feelings and their effects on motivation. For our purposes, the lesson is that children need help in making

judgments about what they deserve and that without such help feelings of unworthiness may hold them back. Adults need to be aware that such feelings may be lurking and to consciously deliver off-setting messages.

For example, feeling disliked and unworthy is said by program professionals to be a common problem for children with disciplinary problems. Such feelings may be the consequence of a self fulfilling prophesies that operate through cycles that caring adult interventions may be able to break. Caring adults affiliated with programs (or not) can mediate with others who "don't like" the child as well as help the child in other ways. For example, Earnest "Lucky" Dotson of the Boston Youth Collaborative that provides case management and program services for middle-school children who have had disciplinary problems applies a simple technique. He has the child list one or two adults whom the child thinks do like him. Then he sends the child to get a list from these adults of what it is about him that they like. The children usually come back with long lists and with statements like "I guess I'm better than I thought I was." No doubt they also feel more worthy.

When youth feel confident and worthy they are more inclined to invest time developing skills for achieving conventional (instead of unconventional) goals.

Teaching About Reward Structures Versus Teaching Values

Different people perceive different rewards for similar behaviors and face different options for finding given types of satisfaction. One should expect that people's behaviors will differ in ways that systematically reflect the differences in their expectations about how to achieve satisfaction. Casual observers will often conclude that "values" differ, when what actually differs are real or perceived opportunities. Here, the most relevant

opportunities are those that satisfy basic human drives for such things as friendship, achievement, influence, security and freedom from hunger. The prospect of achieving satisfaction along one or more of these dimensions is a powerful incentive for undertaking particular activities.

Much of the activity that claims to be teaching values to children is actually teaching them about reward (and penalty) structures. Most of socialization is the process that teaches people the specific ways in which their culture rewards and punishes various behaviors. Note that even religion does not simply "teach values": it promises affiliation with God, emotional security, and other satisfactions that can be regarded as incentives, in return for faith and observance of religious practices. Thus, even moral values may be seen as having their basis in reward structures.

Hence, molding healthy and socially constructive "values" among youth requires providing constructive reward (and penalty) structures and making sure that youth understand them. Programs that we visited do this in a variety of ways. As above, the following simply offers a sampling.

Most programs recognize the importance of celebration. The good feelings associated with celebration become incentives to value and to excel in the celebrated activities in anticipation of future celebrations. Several programs that monitor report cards and academic performance take pains to provide ongoing attention and celebration as rewards both for academic improvement and for steady high-level performance. Only one program (Work Force Unemployment Prevention in Cambridge) provided a small financial incentive for performance in school, and even there, participants said that the attention and excitement motivated them more than the money. A group of about 20 participants in the program voted unanimously that they work harder in school because they know

that the program's staff is watching, and because they look forward to rewards and celebration.

Celebration by programs is especially important for children from households that neglect it. We came to appreciate the subtle distinction between how much parents care about academic performance and how actively they celebrate and promote it. Several youths in the Cambridge program said that their parents do not pay much attention to their performance on report cards and almost never communicate with school teachers. These same parents nevertheless express a strong preference for their children to continue participating in the Work Force Unemployment Prevention Program and express gratitude to the staffers for the roles that they are playing in the children's lives. Staffers argue that these parents care as much as any other parents, but that the infrequency and ambiguity in the feedback that they give to their children reflects their own feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about how to provide the right level and mix of support.

Another values-modification strategy that programs use is to foster discussions that help youths to empathize with the people whom their own behaviors affect. The feelings that boys have toward mothers and younger siblings, for example, are a lever for encouraging good behavior. Youths want mothers and siblings to be happy and they feel satisfaction when they think that they are adding to and not detracting from the household's happiness. Satisfaction may come in the form of warm affiliative feelings or from feelings of power and importance that come from being protective. Conversely, hurting mothers (e.g., by disappointing them) or younger siblings (e.g., by setting a bad example) causes feelings of guilt and also may cause social ostracism. For example, an incarcerated teenager in Cleveland during a focus group discussion

in the reformatory admitted to having stolen from his mother in order to buy drugs. The group immediately expressed its disapproval with one young man saying, "... to steal from your mother is the worst crime in the world -- I don't steal from my mother! That's cold!'" (Jackson, 1988, p. 76)

However, the most poignant examples of empathic consciousness raising from our interviews came when Amos Smith from Always on Saturdays in Hartford talked about developing in his boys a distaste for teenaged fathering. His method is simply to engage youth in discussions about their own fathers. Almost all of the boys live in single-parent households with their mothers and siblings. Discussions about fathers awaken deep-seated and intense feelings. These are by far the strongest peer bonding experiences in the program. Recall that this is the program that dubbed "feelings" to be the fifth and "Master Key." Smith says that he moves the boys:

> to think about the fathering process and what it involves by asking them to think about their own fathers if they are familiar with them; if they are not familiar with them, getting them to think about what they would like it to be like if they did have a father. There is a traditional question that I ask: "How old should you be before you become a father?" The answer to that question [that the boys discover for themselves during the discussion] is generally that there is no age requirement -- there is a maturity requirement and a level of economic responsibility and emotional commitment that are the requirements.
>
> Most bonding occurred around discussions about their fathers -- about either not having a father present or about having a father come around and knowing that he's not going to stay.

In Always on Saturdays these discussions produce expressions of a shared resolve among participants not to put their own children through the pains that they themselves have experienced.

The other strategy that Smith and most other programs employ, is to heighten youths' appreciation of what economists call "opportunity costs." In essence, opportunity costs are "prices." Here, the aim is not that youths

should "value" any given activity more or less in absolute terms. Instead, the point is that they should think more clearly and more often about trade-offs -- what they have to give up in exchange for a given choice. Again, we quote Smith in relationship to fathering:

> Part of my concern was that we were asking kids to delay a decision that was a popular part of behavior in that neighborhood, i.e., sexual expression is a very popular part of one's identity in that neighborhood. You have to give kids some reason to believe that waiting is worthwhile. We had to begin to show them that there was life outside of the neighborhood, and that life outside of that neighborhood wasn't much different from life within the neighborhood, but only that people were exposed to much broader options and opportunities. So, if they waited, and didn't get bogged down or tied down with the issues and anguish of fathering a child early, then they would be exposed to or have the advantages and opportunities that life had to offer.
>
> So, field trips became a very important part of the program, getting out and gaining exposure; being around people that they would not ordinarily be around; having contact with people whom they would not ordinarily meet. So, in a sense, being a "speakers bureau" where kids are able to talk with people and ask questions is a very important part of the program.

Evidence from other programs, however, suggests that some youngsters may not buy the idea that having a baby causes anguish. Providing alternative sources of fulfillment and emphasizing opportunity costs is particularly important for dealing with boys who <u>want</u> to have children as teenagers because it will give them, for example, "a reason to live." John Ballard's program in Cleveland works with teenagers who are already fathers. A teenager in his program expressed the joys of fatherhood this way: "It makes you feel like living! Because that's your flesh. You see yourself in that child. Not only yourself, but you see your maker in that one person!"

Obviously, childless teenagers who anticipate the feelings that this speaker articulates should <u>not</u> be told to value children less. Instead, to summarize the passages above, we need to persuade them (a) to empathize with the unborn child and (b) to recognize that both they and their children will be

happier in the long run (if not in the short run) if they wait. While they wait, programs like those that we visited can help to quench some of the affiliative and other needs that boys might otherwise seek to fill with the love of a child.

Providing Shields Against Impulse

Finally, because some behavior is impulsive and not rational, having the right knowledge of options and strategies, the skills and confidence, the values and the knowledge of "prices," is not always enough to ensure that youths will behave appropriately. Impulses, associated sometimes with natural drives and other times with habits, produce compulsions that may conflict with rationality but nevertheless be difficult to override. "Inner strength" and determination may help, but the compulsion to reach out and strike another in anger, for example, can be a powerful and highly irrational force -- not unlike the impulse that assails the addict who strains to remain drug free In each case, a powerful incentive exists to relieve an internal tension. The more heightened are one's emotions, the more aroused the associated drives and therefore the stronger and more difficult to override the impulse tends to be. (McClelland, 1987)

Programs for youths in inner city neighborhoods help here in at least two important ways. First, they provide activities in locations that are safe havens -- where the likelihood of confronting destructive temptations is lower than in locations where young men might otherwise be (e.g., on the street corner, or in a girlfriend's bedroom after school). Second, they provide participants with a set of peers who can be a strong support group; anecdotes suggest that peers can be extremely effective in deterring one another from ill-advised impulsive behaviors.

DISAGREEMENTS AND UNKNOWNS

The main body of this paper has synthesized the insights and experiences of many youngsters and adults who participate and work in programs serving African American male children. It does not evaluate their programs. Instead, it presents what we think is a common core in the vision that they share of what an ideal program for this target group should comprise.

Substantive disagreements, which we have not emphasized, are few. One, however, concerns the primacy of filling significant adult roles with African American males. Some of the people whom we interviewed argue that having black males in these roles is absolutely critical. Others argue that when other things are equal, black males are preferable, but that other things are not always equal. When necessary, they maintain, adults of other race-sex profiles can work with black male youths quite effectively. A related difference in perspectives concerns the salience of an Afro-centric philosophy and focus. Here, some respondents strongly support a heavily Afro-centric orientation, while others question its relative importance in the context of the many needs that remain unmet for African American youngsters. In the end, these differences pale relative to the range of agreement.

No one dissented from the view that it is very important for African American children to learn more about their culture and history and that neighborhood based programs have a role to play in teaching it to them. Nevertheless, a source of confusion is the lack of a clear common interpretation of what "Afro-centric" means. Only the most extreme perspective, one that for example, teaches hatred and mistrust, finds active dissenters. But ambiguity persists to the extent that some people are not sure what to think of the programs that claim to be Afro-centric, nor are they sure

whether to apply the label to themselves. Also, the deficiencies in adults' own cultural training is often an impediment to more effective cultural training for youth.

Many unknowns remain. The most obvious unknowns concern the effectiveness of the programs. Most appear to be effective but, as far as we know, none has undergone a complete and careful evaluation. Since few (or none) of them keep careful records on participants who have graduated, dropped out, or aged out of their programs, a careful evaluation of long term results would be close to impossible. This is not a criticism. It is a statement of fact: all of the programs operate on tight budgets and their priority is serving children, not collecting ex-post data for researchers and evaluators.

However, if persuaded that formal evaluations might be a bridge to more resources for the children that they serve, many programs would surely welcome the intrusion. For example, several of the programs claim to raise children's grades in school. Simple studies that compare school grades before the program with grades during and after the program would not be difficult if school administrators, parents, and program operators were willing to cooperate.

CONCLUSION

Small scale neighborhood based programs provide relationships and information that can profoundly influence young people's choices and life chances. Effective programs alert youth to positive options, teach them strategies for pursuing those options, and skills for implementing the strategies. Celebration and other activities that affect reward structures provide important incentives. These are common elements of programs that this project visited. Despite these commonalities, however, every program operates in a different environment, has unique capacities and idiosyncratic preferences among its leaders and staff for achieving particular ends.

Policy makers and private sector funders aiming to utilize the insights that this paper offers should not respond with narrowly conceived ideal prototypes. Instead, within clearly but loosely defined parameters, they should invite potential grantees to offer their own ideas for how they would provide the caring and services that our examination of existing programs suggests are the most important. This provides both the flexibility necessary for creativity and adequate structure to ensure that programs are well conceived. A funder issuing a request for proposals could provide supportive materials to give applicants ideas for how to structure their responses (e.g., Mincy and Weiner, 1990; Walsh, 1989) or, alternatively, leave them to their own devices to test their knowledge and resourcefulness. The appendix to this paper outlines the essential features of such a request for proposals, including attention to accountability and evaluation mechanisms. If administered by local review boards, the process of judging and selecting among respondents might be quite manageable even for a nationally funded program.

Scaling up the number and coverage of programs such as this paper

discusses may appear to be so large and expensive a venture that it is not worth considering. However, the need is easy to overestimate. The most intensive versions of these programs are not necessary for every child in every low income neighborhood. Planned variation in the intensity of interaction with children (and their families) can occur even within single programs. The key to efficient management of time and resources is targeting. School teachers, program managers and law enforcement officials are well positioned to select children who appear to need supplemental nurturing. Children who are most in need are often easy to identify.

Both new and existing programs will benefit from assistance with staff training and curriculum development. Few programs have the resources to search extensively for curriculum materials, to review the materials that they find, and to make judgements about relative strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, funders would provide a very useful service by sponsoring and widely disseminating annotated bibliographies of published curricula, especially materials that incorporate racial and ethnic themes. Sponsoring production of additional curriculum materials is also warranted. In addition, "networking conferences" where people trade ideas informally and where workshops provide staff training received strong endorsements from the people whom we interviewed.

The time has come for society to take a closer look at the potential of neighborhood based programs. Careful evaluations are likely to show that the benefit-to-cost ratio can be substantial for programs that are carefully targeted, well conceived and well managed.

APPENDIX 1

A MODEL "REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS"

The framework in the present paper emphasizes how neighborhood based programs can encourage and facilitate youths' engagement in activities that are satisfying and that enhance their prospects for wholesome and productive lives. This section considers what would need to be in the request for proposals (RFP) if a funding agency wanted to support such a program. (The RFP would specify the maximum length of the reply in each category in order to limit what could otherwise be quite lengthy responses.) Some of the items below are standard proposal categories but all address issues that were covered in the body of this paper.

Identity and Qualifications of the Proposed Program Director

Most directors of programs visited had masters degrees in social work, education, or psychological counseling. It is difficult to know the degree to which the academic credential is merely a sorting device for identifying the people with the most commitment to children, versus a measure of a person's preparation to serve children effectively. The RFP should not have strict degree requirements, but should weigh degrees heavily in choosing among respondents. Of course, the ideal is the combination of an appropriate degree with several years of relevant experience in administering programs and working with children. This is especially the case where the applicant proposes to serve special-needs populations such as delinquents, drug involved children, abused children, or chronic truants.

However, even more important than an appropriate degree, is evidence that the director cares sincerely for the welfare of disadvantaged children.

Applicants should list personal references who will attest to their past successes in communicating with and caring for the target population. For example, the RFP might require the applicant to provide letters from or telephone numbers of two parents and two professional colleagues familiar with his or her work.

If the respondent proposes to employ other professionals their identities (if known) and qualifications should be given. Any staff training that the director would provide should be described.

Identity of Target Population and Methods of Outreach

The RFP would specify only a few demographic characteristics of the target population: for example, males aged 8 through 16 who, because of their household structure, socio-economic status, neighborhood, or past behavior, appear to be at-risk for developmentally problematic choices and behaviors. Each program would be allowed to choose its own target neighborhood(s) and other characteristics of a target population that fit within the broad outlines of the eligible range. Once funded, programs would be expected to stay roughly with the populations described in their proposals, but the funding agency would allow flexibility at the margins.

The proposal should say where the program would find participants and how it would persuade them to participate in the program. If the applicant is proposing to attract a generally hard to reach population (e.g., truants, youths who have been selling drugs, delinquents) the proposal should show some evidence that the applicant recognizes the difficulties of attracting and retaining such participants and has strategies in mind for meeting this challenge.

Substantive Program Content and Instructional Methods

Here, the RFP would ask applicants what they expect to teach participants and how. It might provide headings such as those that this paper employs. For example, the RFP might ask respondents to discuss what ideas, materials, activities, techniques, and philosophies they would consider most important for addressing each of the following:

1. EXPOSURE TO OPTIONS:
   a. Jobs/Careers (Present and Future)
   b. Life-Styles (Present and Future)
   c. Other

2. STRATEGIES and SKILLS:
   a. for Managing Relationships (with Parents, Peers, Teachers,...)
   b. for Managing Feelings (Anger, Sadness,...)
   c. for Managing Identity Issues (Race, Class,...)
   d. for Recreation (Sports, Games, Trips,...)
   e. for Employability (Dress, Interviewing, Conduct,...)
   f. for Academic Success (Studying, Taking Tests,...
   g. Other

3. VALUES AND REWARD STRUCTURES:
   a. Celebration (for Academics, Conduct, Sports,...)
   b. Consciousness Raising (regarding Teen Fatherhood, Crime,...)
   c. Conduct and Performance Standards in the Program
   d. Other

These categories roughly parallel the discussion of this paper, covering options/roles, strategies, skills, and reward structures. The RFP might ask applicants to select a primary outcome target (e.g., dropout prevention) for which they would agree to be most accountable, but to select a number of secondary emphases as well, taking into consideration the needs of the target population.

Ideally, the respondents would find it appropriate to weave together issues of race, class, culture, and identity through coverage of several categories on the list. Similarly, topics such as decision-making, problem solving, planning, goal-setting, and related principles might appear under several headings. Funders would not necessarily restrict programs to organize

their formal curricula using the headings in the above list, but nevertheless would require some attention to each.

Staff-Participant Ratio and Frequency of Contact

The most important point that our interviews produced was that relationships between staff and participants, and among participants, are critical foundations for achieving other programmatic goals. In answering this item, respondents should specify staff-to-participant ratios and frequencies of contact to allow development of the necessary relationships. Also, the response should suggest specific methods for fostering personal interaction and communication.

Programs may specify a "core" and a "non-core" level of participation, where youngsters in the non-core may use program facilities but will not have as much personal support and attention as youngsters in the core program. Programs proposing this option should say how they would ration access to the core slots. If the applicant expects that staff will meet with core participants less than once per week or that the program will have a core participant-to-staff ratio of greater than about 12 to 1 (numbers that our interviews suggest are typical), then they should explain what effect they expect this to have on forming and maintaining relationships. Volunteer mentors may supplement staff (see below).

Peer Bonding and Peer Support

Programs use a variety of mechanisms including peer tutoring, team sports, rap sessions, and other group activities to foster peer bonding and peer support. Experienced program operators will have plenty of ideas here. This section of the RFP should have applicants spell out the methods that they expect to use in the proposed program.

Methods and Mechanisms for Using Unpaid Assistance

It is worthwhile soliciting in some detail how applicants plan to use and to manage volunteer resources. Common problems include (a) not being able to find and sustain participation by the number of volunteer mentors that programs expect, and (b) the hassle of screening volunteers and directing their involvement. Respondents who expect to use volunteers should comment on their familiarity with the issues involved here and with their expectations regarding how they will address the associated problems.

Parental Involvement

Uniformly, people who work with children from disadvantaged families talk about the value of having access to the whole family in order to help resolve family problems and to secure more in-home support for the program participant. The RFP should ask respondents to anticipate problems involved in securing parental support for youths and to describe the techniques that they would expect to apply.

Interaction with Schools, Courts, and other Service Agencies

Applicants should discuss how they would expect to interact with other institutions. Frequently, for example, parents of disadvantaged youths are intimidated by teachers and court personnel and invite program staffers to come along on visits. The respondent should say whether the program will be willing to interact with other agencies and how. Any existing relationships between the applicant and other agencies should be described here. The proposal should mention any special ideas for inter-organizational collaboration.

Record Keeping and Tracking of Progress

Funders might, for example, require records on program attendance, retention, participation in activities, important staff-participant contacts

outside of regular activities, and staff ratings of participant performance and development. In addition, they might want records (where possible) on school attendance and school grades. In a demonstration project, the funders would have to carefully consider what they were trying to demonstrate and then fine-tune data requirements with this in mind. Respondents to the request for proposals would address both their willingness to comply with data collection requirements and their planned mechanisms for doing so. An appropriately flexible RFP might ask respondents to suggest what they want to demonstrate, what performance measures they want to be judged on, and how they plan to organize and present their evidence. One can imagine a process in which the candidates selected to receive funding would participate as a group in setting the final parameters of the demonstration.

Additional Comments on Accountability

Here, respondents would supplement the discussion of performance measures under the preceding heading with a discussion of other accountability issues. For example, they might spell out what they perceive to be the already present accountability pressures in their own socio-political environments. They might also respond to the idea, for example, that they should be willing to tolerate some given number of visits (perhaps 3 per year) on short notice (e.g., 3 days notice) of agents from the funding agency.

A Short Profile of the Organization Sponsoring the Application

This section would be a fairly straightforward description of the sponsoring organization. It should include, for example, the organization's primary mission, organizational structure, board composition, experience with similar programs to what it is proposing, and a statement of what resources it is willing to commit to the proposed program.

An Evolutionary Vision

Respondents would be invited to speculate how their programs might evolve over time under alternative assumptions about available funding. For example, some might suggest potential roles for program alumni (e.g., use them as mentors, tutors, etc.), or potential links with other organizations that may take time to develop. This section could be used to speculate about contingencies and to suggest how the program would be likely to adapt.

APPENDIX 2

PROGRAMS SERVING YOUNG BLACK MALES
SITES THAT THE PROJECT VISITED

PROGRAM	TARGET GROUP	CONTACTS
Addison Terrace Learning Center 2136 Elmore Square Pittsburgh, PA	Young Adult Males, Ages 18-25 Out of School	Mrs. Stephanie Griswald-Ezekoye Executive Director (412) 642-2081
African American Men's Leadership Council Males Rites of Passage Program 3817 West Rogers Avenue Baltimore, Maryland 21215	Black Males Adolescents	Mr. Richard Rowe (301) 396-1429 Mr. Darryl Kennon (202) 842-4570
Always On Saturday Hartford Action Plan 30 Arbor Street Hartford, CT 06106	Black Males Ages 9-15 In School Youth	Ms. Carolyn Delgado Program Manager (203) 236-4872 Mr. Amos Smith Case Manager
Black Male Youth Health Enhancement Project Shiloh Baptist Church 1510 9th Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001	Black Males Ages 9-17 In School Youth	Mr. Andre Watson Project Director (201) 332-0213
Boston Youth Development Project	Middle School Youth	Mr. Hal Phillips Director Mr. Ernest Dodson, Program Manager
Bringing Black Males to Manhood Family Enhancement Project Pittsburgh Urban League Street Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2064	Black Males, Ages 13-17 In-School Youth	Leon Haley, Ph.D. Exec. Director Pittsburgh Urban 200 Ross League (412) 261-1130 Michael Freeland Project Director (412) 481-5705 Mr. Robert A. Carter Outreach Coordinator
Choice The University of Maryland Baltimore County Campus 216 Mathematics-Psychology Building 5401 Wilkens Avenue Baltimore, Maryland 21228	80% Black Males, Ages 15-18 (In-School Youth)	John S.Martello Project Director Psychologist and Suite Professional Office of Practice (301) 455-2494

PROGRAM	TARGET GROUP	CONTACTS
I Have a Dream Program Cleveland State University Rhodes Tower, Suite 1416 Euclid Avenue at East 22nd St Cleveland, Ohio 44115	Black Males & Females Ages 15-16	Nancy Klein, Ph.D. Project Director Professor & Associate Dean College of Education (216) 687-3737 Mr. Douglas Clay Program Manager (216) 687-4860
Invest Now University of Pittsburgh Bellefield Annex Pittsburgh New Futures Project 30 CNG Tower 625 Liberty Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15222	Black Males, Ages 12-13 In-School Youth	Mrs. Leslie Horn George D.Harris Asst Director Pittsburgh, (412) 338-2605
Mali Yetu (Wealth) Cleveland State University Rhodes Towers, Room 1451	Black Males & Females Ages 6-14	Sanza Clark, Ph.D. Project Director (216) 563-7129
100 Black Men of Pittsburgh 1008 Franklin Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15221	Black Males Ages 14-17	Lonnie Hudspeth President (412) 765-3080
Pittsburgh in Partnership with Parents Young Fathers Program Hill House Association 1835 Center Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15219	Black Males, Ages 15-25 Youth Fathers Out-of-School Youth	Mr. Jim Henry Executive Director Hill House Association Mrs. Jo Anne Monroe Project Direct (PPP) Mr. Carl Redwood Case Manager Young Fathers Program
Positive Futures Urban League of Eastern MA 88 Warren Street Roxbury, MA 02119	Black Males, Ages 6-12 In-School	Charles Hoyt Project Director (617) 442-4519
Project Roadmap IBM 100 East Pratt Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202	Black Males, Ages 17-21 (School Dropouts)	Mr. Dave Johnson Project Director Branch Manager IBM US Marketing & Service (301) 332-2789
Roxbury Youthworks, Inc. Clinical Services Unit 85 Warren Street Roxbury, MA 02119	Black Males, Ages 14-17	Mr.Robert Thornell Clinicial Program Director (617) 427-7000 x 292

PROGRAM	TARGET GROUP	CONTACTS
SIMBA End East Inn Neighborhood House 2749 Woodhill Road Cleveland, Ohio 44104	Black Males, Ages 9-17	Mr. Paul Hill Executive Director
Success Model The Second Step P.B.A. Inc. 1425 Beaver Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15233	In-School Youth, Ages 14-18 Males & Females	Mr. Robert H. Harrison Project Director (412) 322-8415
Teen Father Program The Hough Multi-Purpose Center 8555 Hough Avenue Cleveland, Ohio 44106	Black Males, 15-25 Young Fathers	Mr. Charles Ballard Project Director (216) 791-1468
The Friendly Inn Settlement House Cleveland, Ohio	Black Males & Females Ages 6-18	Mrs. Gerri Burns Executive Director
The Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Scholarship Program The University of Maryland Baltimore County Campus Office of the Provost Baltimore, Maryland 21228	Black Males, Ages 17-18 Entering Freshman Univ of Maryland Baltimore County	Freeman A. Hrabowski, Ph.D. Project Director Provost UMBC (301) 455-2333 Ms. Susan Boyer Coordinator (301) 455-2336
The D.C. Youth Initiative National Center on Institutions & Alternative Sentencing 635 States Lane Suite G-100 Alexandria, Virginia 22314	Black Males, Ages 15-17 Juvenile Offenders Out-Of-School	Mr. Earl El-Amin Project Director Mr. Kemry Hughes
Young Fathers Program Urban League of East Boston 88 Warren Street Roxbury, MA	Young Fathers, Ages 15-21 In-School & Out-of-School	Joan Wallace- Benjamin, Ph.D. Executive Director
Work Force Unemployment Prevention Program Cambridge Housing Authority 270 Green Street Cambridge, MA 02139	All Races Ages 13-18 In School	Steven Swanger Director of Tenant Services (617) 864-3020

Youth Leadership Council Mayor's Commission on Families, Health & Welfare Planning Association 200 Ross Street Pittsburgh, PA 15219	Black Males & Females Ages 14-18 In-School Youth	Huberta Jackson- Lowman, Ph.D. Director (412) 392-3120

APPENDIX 3: MEASURED OUTCOMES FOR TWO PROGRAMS

This appendix discusses results from questionnaires completed by youth in two programs. We administered the questionnaires ourselves, reading each question aloud and guiding participants through the possible answers.

One group included 10 participants from the Black Male Youth Health Enhancement Project at Washington's Shiloh Baptist Church. The other comprised youngsters from a program called Mali Yatu which, in the East African language Swahili, means "our wealth." The Mali Yatu program meets at Cleveland State University. It is a summer recreation and cultural enrichment program whose participants are male and female and come from both low and middle-income African-American households. All of Shiloh's participants and most of the participants of other programs that we visited are males from low-income households.

One of the primary goals of the Shiloh program is to build self-esteem by helping each participant to find at least one activity that he enjoys and at which he can become skilled and self-confident. Therefore, in addition to providing academic help and encouragement, the program teaches a number of games and recreational skills.

The majority of the boys in the Shiloh survey think that the program has helped to improve their attitudes about school, study skil. . expected grades, self-respect, respect for their race, and feelings of control over their lives. Half or more answer "much better" (rather than simply "a little better") for study skills, self respect, respect for their race, and feeling in control over their lives. In open-ended questions participants credit the program with teaching them new skills and improving their behaviors. Hence, the Shiloh program builds both skills and confidence.

It is interesting that while 7 of 10 Shiloh participants say in the survey that their study skills are "a little better" or "much better," none of the seven boys who are 13 years old and younger mention academic skills in answering the open-ended question concerning what they can do better now than before the program. Instead, all list new recreational skills. This shows the salience of recreational skills for the younger boys.

We can speculate with some confidence that without the recreational component the program would be less successful in improving participants' academic skills and attitudes: school attendance and academic performance are prerequisites for participating in recreation. Andre Watson monitors academic progress and requires participants to bring their report cards at the end of each 6-week school marking period. Those who do not maintain a 2.2 GPA must temporarily not participate in recreational activities.

In addition to the daily after-school study hall that precedes recreation during the school year and a weekly classroom-style discussion meeting, the program fosters additional practice of study skills by conducting a monthly competition to be the "Champion" in African-American history. This is the title awarded to the participant who scores highest on the monthly history quiz. Answers come in advance so that the boys can study for the quiz. Hence, in both academic and recreational activities, the program fosters friendly competition and provides recognition for improvement as well as for consistently superior performance. Moreover, by strongly encouraging the boys to help and support one another, Watson has fostered peer bonding and a supportive peer culture. A bulletin board in Watson's office highlights participants' goals and achievements.

It is impossible to know the relative importance of the program's various

activities in accounting for the fact that 8 of the 10 answered to the survey that they respect themselves more now. The fact that 9 of the 10 respect their race "much better" may be an important element of the explanation. But their progress in academic and recreational skills is surely important as well. Each component interacts with the others to form a coherent enrichment experience in a setting that provides a safe haven from the streets.

Mali Yatu used an earlier version of the questionnaire that was three questions shorter. The children were mostly females, and the program operates for two 4-week sessions during the summer each year, so that most of the participants (who were near the end of a session) had less exposure to the program than was true for the Shiloh participants, who come year around. Still, we find a similar pattern in the answers with most children saying that they respect themselves and their race more and have better study skills because of the program. The ability to speak Swahili was the new skill that Mali Yatu respondents mentioned most consistently, with 10 of the 15 mentioning it explicitly.

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